

What is claimed is:

1. An earplug comprising:  
5 an earplug having a surface with a pattern formed thereon by  
subjecting the earplug surface to a printing device which forms the pattern on the  
earplug surface.
2. The earplug of claim 1, wherein the printing device comprises a non-  
10 impact printing device which is located remote from the earplug when the pattern is  
formed on the earplug surface.
3. The earplug of claim 1, wherein the printing device comprises an ink jet  
printing device.  
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4. The earplug of claim 1, wherein printing device comprises an impact  
type printing device which intimately contacts the earplug surface when the pattern  
is formed on the ear plug.
- 20 5. The earplug of claim 4, wherein the printing device is one of a PAD  
printing device and a heat transfer printing device.
6. The earplug of claim 3, wherein the ink jet printing device forms a dot  
matrix pattern.
- 25 7. The earplug of claim 1, wherein the pattern includes one or more  
colors arranged according to a predetermined pattern.

8. The earplug of claim 1, wherein the pattern comprises at least one of a custom logo or printed text.

5 9. The earplug of claim 1, wherein printing devices comprises a plurality of printing devices orientated relative to one another so that a plurality of patterns are formed on the earplug.

10 10. The earplug of claim 9, wherein the plurality of printing devices are orientated one of 120°, 180°, and 90° relative to one another.

11. The earplug of claim 1, wherein the material of the earplug comprises a foam material.

15 12. A process for forming a pattern of an earplug, the process comprising:  
providing an earplug;  
orienting the earplug relative to a printing device; and  
printing the pattern on the earplug using the printing device.

20 13. The process of claim 12, wherein the printing device comprises an ink jet printer.

25 14. The process of claim 12, wherein the printing device comprises a non-impact printing device which is located remote from the earplug when the pattern is formed on the earplug surface.

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10 matrix pattern.

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21. The process of claim 21, wherein the plurality of printing devices are oriented one of 120°, 180°, and 90° relative to one another.

22. The process of claim 12, wherein the earplug is oriented by an alignment device, the alignment device positioning the earplug within or near the printing device.

5 23. The process of claim 22, wherein the alignment device selectively positions the earplug in a plurality of orientations during the printing process.

24. The process of claim 12, wherein the printing device applies a pattern to the earplug from a plurality of positions.

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25. The process of claim 12, wherein the printing device includes at least one nozzle, and wherein the nozzle applies a pattern to the earplug from a plurality of orientations.

15 26. The process of claim 25, wherein the nozzle is associated with a microprocessor and computer unit such that the nozzle selectively applies a pattern to the earplug from a plurality of orientations.

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